



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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LIFE SCIENCES AND PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM

PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

Established in 1980 out of an increasing concern for the cross-influences between the biomedical sciences and public policy, the Life Sciences and Public Policy Program is devoted to conducting long-term scholarly studies and timely practical projects addressing these issues.

Dr. William W. Lowrance, who earned his Ph.D. in organic and biological chemistry from The Rockefeller University in 1970, is director of the Program.

Many of our society's most important issues arise because of stunningly rapid progress in genetics, medical diagnosis and therapeutics, and related biomedical sciences. Other issues, such as those surrounding the disposal of toxic waste, seem mundane but are hard to analyze and are necessarily both technical and political in solution. And others, such as reform of regulation of food, pharmaceuticals, and the occupational environment, hybridize policy and scientific considerations.

Although laboratories around the country perform scientific research, and organizations such as The Brookings Institution and several university departments conduct policy-related studies, few independent research institutions work effectively in the no-man's-land between public policy and science. This is where the Program strives to make a special contribution.

By involving and consulting with research faculty and drawing upon the network of institutional connections, the Program benefits from the exceptionally strong biomedical base of The Rockefeller University and its affiliates, such as the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and Cornell University Medical College. It also works informally with industrial, special-interest, governmental, and other leaders.

In all of its efforts the Program tries to facilitate public understanding of issues by working directly with the communications media, by interpreting findings in commonsense language, and by rendering assistance to public leaders.

PROGRAM INITIATIVES

1. Science in Service of Human Values. The complete manuscript of this book, which Dr. Lowrance has been researching and writing throughout the past four years, has been transmitted to Oxford University Press (a copy of the table of contents is enclosed). Oxford will publish the book as both a trade and textbook in spring, 1985.

The book examines the influence technical activities exert on social options, values, and decisions; the use of systematic analysis in decisionmaking; social roles and responsibilities of technical professionals; and societal guidance of technical activity. Cases addressed include, for example, sociobiology, the race/IQ controversy, "Aesculapian notary-public" roles of physicians, assessment of risks and benefits of technological systems such as nuclear reactors, protection of human experimental subjects, control of recombinant-DNA research, and resolution of environmental disputes.

2. Assessment of Health Effects at Chemical Disposal Sites. The proceedings of this symposium, which the Program convened in June, 1981, have found wide use.

3. Public Health Risks of the Dioxins. The proceedings of this symposium, which the Program convened in October, 1983, have been published (a brochure describing the contents is enclosed). Copies are being distributed to a wide variety of public leaders.

4. Other activities. Dr. Lowrance continues to give quite a few lectures in diverse institutions. He serves on three committees:

- Executive Committee of the Science Advisory Board to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency;
- Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; and
- Outside Advisory Board to the Interdisciplinary Programs in Health at the Harvard School of Public Health, of which he is chairman.